GREEN HILL HOME SITE & CEMETERY

Compiled by members of the Leadership Brentwood Class of 2008:

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The information was compiled from the following sources:

- Granny White and Her Pumpkins, by T. Vance Little, ©1993; pages 11, 12, 31, and 32.
- Historical Markers of Williamson County, by Rick Warwick, ©1999; pages 36 and 37.
- When Cotton Was King On Concord Road, by Vance Little, ©1999; pages 116-122.

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Brentwood Has a Multitude of Family Cemeteries

Brentwood is about to get a funeral home, but it is still without a cemetery. Our ancestors dealt with the problem by establishing their own cemeteries.

The first Brentwood settlers had a tendency to bury their dead in community cemeteries, which were usually connected with a church. Such cemeteries were at Liberty Church, just off Concord Road, and Johnson Chapel Church. Eleanor Irwin Moore, wife of early settler james Moore and daughter of Revolutionary War General Robert Irwin, died in 1809 and was buried at the "Liberty Meetinghouse."

As plantations developed, they became self-sufficient economic and social units. Planters started their own cemeteries. Those who owned slaves, as most Brentwood planters did, established separate slave cemeteries. Both were usually located on high hills on the place (less distance to travel to heaven).

Around the turn of the century, grave robbing became a problem. Families started burying their dead nearer to the house, maybe in the yard, so that they could watch the graves. Conceivably, there could be three or more cemeteries on each farm in Brentwood.

According to the inventory of Williamson County cemeteries done by the Williamson County Historical Society, there are 45 known cemeteries in Brentwood. There are probably another score that are un-inventoried because of their disappearance, either by passage of time or at the bulldozer blade.

About half of Brentwood's cemeteries are maintained by the descendants of those buried there or the homeowners on whose properties the cemetery is located. Almost every subdivision in Brentwood was formerly a plantation. On it somewhere there is a cemetery that is now likely in the yard of a home in that subdivision.

The other half of Brentwood's cemeteries have either disappeared or are in an overgrown condition. Such is the condition of the Gray Cemetery on Gordon Petty Drive. The Gray family was an early and prominent family in Brentwood.

It is easy for a cemetery to slip into oblivion. Few of them had tombstones until the mid 1800's. Graves were marked by simple "fieldstones," which are easily obscured. Clues in looking for an old cemetery are (1) sandstones arranged in rows, (2) cedar trees, which were planted as memorials, (3) vinca, which was used as a ground cover, and (4) spring flowers.

Like their homes, some family cemeteries were plain, and some were fancy. Some of the fancy ones were the Gray Cemetery, the Andrew Crockett Cemetery, the Jabez Owen Cemetery on Old Crockett Road, the Holt Cemetery, which is inaccessible, and the Green Hill Cemetery.

The oldest cemetery in Brentwood is the one in Carondelet. It was the Hightower and Alexander Smith Cemetery.

The most well-known cemetery in Brentwood is the Green Hill Cemetery in Liberty Downs. In it is buried Rev. Green Hill, an early leader in the Methodist Church. The cemetery was deeded to the Tennessee Conference of the United Methodist Church in 1960.

The Methodist Church has always been avant guarde. In 1858 or 1867 (accounts vary) it was the first church in Tennessee to allow men and women to sit together. The enabling resolution authorized "ladies and gentlemen" to sit together in church "for the better preservation of good order, quiet and convenience of the congregation."

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Green Hill Was A Man — and An Important One Too

One of Brentwood's most prominent residents was Green Hill. It is to be noted that he was a man, and not a place. He lived at what is now Liberty Downs Subdivision. His home no longer stands, but another large home has been built on the site of the original home and on the same foundation. That home is now occupied by country singer Alan Jackson.

Green Hill was from a wealthy Virginia Tidewater family. They were communicants of the Church of England, and he was sent to England to be educated. The family moved to North Carolina, and when the Revolutionary War came along, Green Hill cast his lot with the Colonies.

He represented his county at the New Bern Conference of 1774 and was a member of every North Carolina Provincial Congress while he was a resident of the state. He enlisted as a private in the North Carolina Militia in 1781, then at the age of 40. He was later promoted to chaplain.

Other public service of Green Hill included his election as a Justice of the Peace in 1778, County Court Clerk in 1785, Council of State in 1783, and Delegate to the Confederation Congress in 1785. He also served as State Treasurer for the Halifax District of North Carolina from May, 1779 to May, 1785.

He and his family were ardent members of the Methodist movement and on first name basis with all the bigwigs in that movement. His home in North Carolina was the scene of several general Conferences of the Methodist Church. After the Methodist Church was officially organized in 1784, 20 Methodist preachers met in Green Hill's home in Louisburg, North Carolina, to plan the strategy for future growth of the Methodist Church in the South.

It's not real clear why Green Hill at the age of 50 plus and the father of 13 children, successful and well respected, would pull up stakes and move 500 miles to an area that was still wilderness and where Indian

problems abounded. You can bet that he was not one step ahead of the law. He and his wife came to what was to become Brentwood on an exploratory trip to view his land. Four years later in 1798 they moved to Tennessee. He brought his wife and eight of his children with him. They stayed within the protection of Fort Nashboro until their house was completed.

For those who don't know, Conferences are a pretty big deal in the Methodist Church. The first one to be held west of the Alleghanies was held at the Brentwood home of Green Hill in 1808. Two of the first bishops in America (a pretty big deal too) Bishops Francis Asbury and William McKendree attended that Conference.

The main item on the agenda at the Conference of 1808 was the formulation of a Church policy on slavery. The Church adopted a policy of opposing slavery. It is to be noted that Green Hill himself was then a slave owner and continued to own slaves until his death in 1826. In his will he said: "Respecting my colored people whom I now possess, it is my sincere desire that whenever Government shall permit, that they all be liberated for I consider slavery to be unjust and inconsistent with Spirit and Doctrine of the Gospel of Christ. But under present law we are restrained that liberty, therefore, until that desirable event shall take place I dispose of them as follows..."

Green Hill was instrumental in founding the Liberty Methodist Church, one of the oldest churches in Tennessee. That church was the mother church of others in the Brentwood area, namely Smyrna Church (no longer in existence), Johnson Chapel, and Brentwood United Methodist Church.

Green Hill is buried in the cemetery just south of the home, which is enclosed in an ancient stone wall. The cemetery is maintained as a shrine by the Tennessee Conference of the United Methodist Church. An historical marker marks the site. By the way, there used to be an historical marker dedicated to Green Hill on Franklin Road at Concord. It disappeared when the road was being widened.



Portrait of young Reverend Green Hill, Methodist pioneer minister

GREEN HILL



This Revolutionary War officer and Methodist leader settled and built his home here in 1799. He was influential in establishing Methodism on the Tennessee frontier and founded the Liberty Methodist Church one mile east. The Western Conference of the Methodist Episcopal church of 1808, held at his home, was attended by Bishop Francis Asbury and newly elected Bishop William McKendree. The Hill family cemetery a short distance south and near the site of his home is maintained as a shrine by the Tennessee Conference of the United Methodist Church.

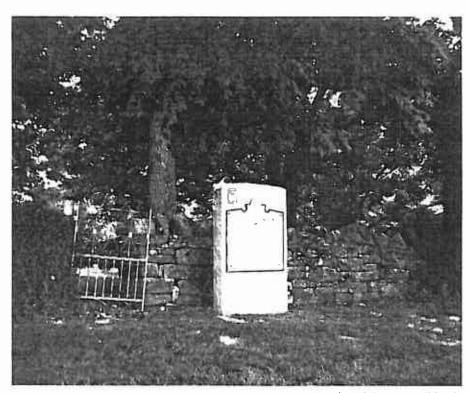
ERECTED BY GREEN HILL'S DESCENDANTS WILLIAMSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, 1994 Location: Concord Road at Green Hills Boulevard, Brentwood

GREEN HILL SHRINE



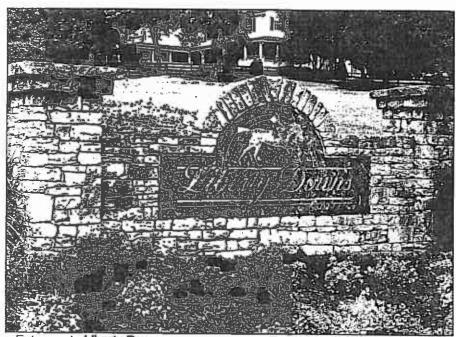
Green Hill (Nov. 2, 1741—Sept. 11, 1826) moved from North Carolina to the large plantation of which this is a center in 1799. Hill was a Revolutionary War Colonel, generous philanthropist, and a Methodist preacher for over 50 years. On Oct. 1–7, 1808, he entertained the ninth session of the Western Conference of the Methodist Church at this place. The cemetery nearby, in which Hill and his family are buried, was given by 58 of his descendants to the Tennessee Conference of the Methodist Church on June 25, 1960, and was accepted as a Methodist shrine.

TENNESSEE HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Location: Green Hill Cemetery in Liberty Downs Subdivision, Brentwood



Resting place of the Green Hill family

26. UBERTY DOWNS



Entrance to Liberty Downs.

IBERTY DOWNS was the home of one of Brentwood's most distinguished early settlers. He was Green Hill who, contrary to what his name implies, was a man and not a place.

Green Hill was the son of Green and Grace Bennett Hill who were born in England and came to the Virginia Tidewater region in the early 1700s. They later moved to Bute County, North Carolina, where their son Green Hill Jr. was born. The Hills were wealthy planters and loyal British subjects. The elder Hill served as a vestryman in St. George's Parish.

The younger Green Hill was sent to England for his schooling. When he returned, he married Nancy Thomas by whom he had five children. His second marriage was to Mary Sewell by whom he had eight children. Both wives were from prominent North Carolina families.

When affairs between the American colonies and England began to worsen, Green Hill cast his lot and his wealth with the Colonial cause. He was a North Carolina representative to the New Bern Conference of 1774 where the seeds of revolution were sown. Thereafter, he served as a member of every North Carolina Provincial Congress while a resident of North Carolina.

At the age of 40, Green Hill enlisted in the North Carolina Militia in 1781 as a Private. He was promoted to Major and later to Chaplain. Green Hill's other public services included the positions of Justice of the Peace in 1778, County Court Clerk in 1785, Council of State in 1783, Delegate to the Confederation Congress in 1785, and State Treasurer for the Halifax District from 1785 to 1799.

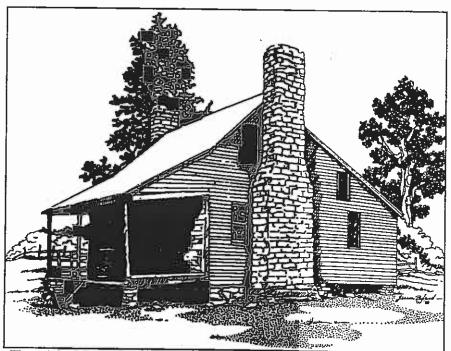
And then, on top of all that, he was an ordained Methodist preacher. It was in the field of religion that he made the greatest impact on the local area. The first religious services in the area were held at his home. There, the attic chambers of 'Liberty Hill' were fitted up as a chapel. There was also a camp ground at the foot of the hill where revival meetings were held.

He founded Brentwood's Liberty Methodist Church, one of the earliest churches in Tennessee. The Conference of 1808 was held at Green Hill's home. It was a gathering of Methodist preachers from all over Tennessee. There were also two bishops present, Bishops Francis Asbury and William McKendree, the first Americanborn Bishop of the Methodist Church.

At the Conference of 1808 of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the major topic covered was the issue of slavery. A

resolution condemning slavery was adopted. Green Hill was himself a slave owner. At his death in 1825, he left a will in which he said: Respecting my colored people whom I now possess, it is my sincere desire that whenever Government shall permit, that they all be liberated for I consider slavery to be unjust and inconsistent with Spirit and Doctrine of the Gospel of Christ. But under present law we are restrained that liberty: therefore, until that desirable event shall take place I dispose of them as follows

Green Hill was active in the Methodist movement from its earliest times. He was present at the organizational meeting of the Methodist Episcopal Church held at the Lovely Lane Methodist Church in Baltimore on December 24, 1784. In 1785, he hosted in his home in Louisville, North Carolina, the first and the three later sessions of what is now called the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference of the Methodist Church.



The original Green Hill home before it was torn down in the 1930s.

Green Hill's original plantation was 717 acres made up of a 640-acre grant he purchased from Revolutionary War veteran Randolph Humphreys. He later bought a 77-acre no-man's-land that had not been granted to anyone because of a surveying error. His land ran all the way to Wilson Pike and included a part of the CHENOWETH, SARATOGA HILLS, and INDIAN POINT Subdivisions.

In his will, Green Hill left the 571-acre part of his plantation to his son Joshua Cannon Hill. He was the youngest of Green Hill's 13 children. He was born in 1795 and was a very small child when the family came to Tennessee. He became a physician.

Joshua Cannon Hill lived but one year longer than his father. He died in 1827 at the age of 32, leaving a wife and five small children. His wife Lemiza Lanier Hill continued to live there until her death in 1860. In his will, Joshua Cannon Hill provided that his four sons be educated for professional callings if they should choose it and that his daughter be educated for a woman's business.

The children lived up to his expectations. One son, John Lanier Hill, became a Methodist preacher. His oldest son, William Henry Shelby Hill, became a lawyer. He later served as Clerk and Master of the Williamson County Chancery Court and later Judge of that Court. The daughter, Mary Elizabeth Hill, opted to marry a Methodist preacher, William Burr.

William Henry Shelby Hill (he used his full name), the Judge, ended up with the homeplace. He lived there until his death in 1893. During his tenure, he sold large tracts of the original 571-acre spread.

After the death of William Henry Shelby Hill, the place passed to Peter D. Owen. It is not clear whether he acquired it by inheritance or whether he purchased it. Peter D. Owen was married to Sallie F. Waller, the daughter of Elizabeth and Pierce Waller. Elizabeth was, before her marriage, Elizabeth Cannon, the granddaughter of Green Hill.

Peter D. Owen and his wife Sallie F. Waller Owen had two children, John F. (Jack) Owen and a daughter Mary Owen, who married James T. Rains. Jack Owen bought his sister's share at

their father's death in 1902. He continued to own the place until the 1930s when he sold it to Joris M. White, although he did not live there. He never married and lived with William H. Edmondson until Edmondson's death. After that, he took up residence with the elder Edmondson's son, Henry Edmondson and his wife Blanche Lazenby Edmondson. Jack Owen lost an arm in a farming accident at an early age. He died in 1941 and is buried in the Waller Cemetery on Cloverland Drive.



The Green Hill Cemetery where Major Green Hill is buried.

The old Green Hill home stood until 1939 when the farm was sold to Mrs. T. A. Washington. She tore the house down and built another on the same foundation. The old smoke house is the only one of the original buildings that is still standing

In recent years, country music artist Alan Jackson lived in a house that was built on the foundation of the old Green Hill home. At this writing, word has it that Alan built a bigger and better residence in another section of the county and is no longer a Brentwood resident.

Mrs. Washington, one of the owners of Liberty Hill (the old name for Liberty Downs), was well known for her iris garden. Charles Plaxico converted the old dairy barn into a green house and carried on a commercial orchid-growing business. He was a widely known authority on the cultivation of orchids.

Green Hill and his second wife Mary Sewell Hill are buried in the stonewall-enclosed cemetery across the road from the main residence. It is maintained as a shrine by the History and Archives of the Tennessee Conference of the United Methodist Church. The cemetery was so dedicated in 1951.

An historical marker has been erected at the cemetery which bears the following inscription, *Green Hill (Nov. 3, 1741 - Sept. 11,*

1826) moved from North Carolina to the large plantation of which this is a center in 1799. Hill was a Revolutionary War Colonel, generous philanthropist, and a Methodist preacher for over 50 years. On Oct. 1-7, 1808 he entertained the ninth session of the Westem Conference of the Methodist Church at this place. The cemetery nearby in which Hill and his family are buried was given by 54 of his descendants to the Tennessee Conference of the Methodist Church on June 25, 1960 and was accepted as a Methodist shrine.



The Major Green Hill Cemetery, a United Methodist Shrine.